

First Steps in C. S. A.

19. THE GUILD SOCIAL ORDER

(CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY—I)

In Lesson 5 we learnt that Catholic Social Action has a twofold aim: namely, the reform of moral conduct and of social institutions. In various lessons we have examined the *structure* and *spirit* of the chief social institutions. In this lesson we shall study the *structure* or *framework* of social institutions, as proposed by the Holy Father. Just as a badly built locomotive, with defective parts, will never run well, despite the skill of the driver, so also, human society will never enjoy social peace and happiness, if the different units of society, such as, the family, trade unions, etc., are defective.

Section I. What is a Vocational Group?

Writing in *Quadragesimo Anno*, section 82, Pope Pius XI says, "The aim of social legislation must therefore be the re-establishment of vocational groups." Thus, the Holy Father presents his plan for the reorganisation of the *structure* or *framework* of industrial society.

The word "vocation" is here taken to mean, a profession, a calling, a trade; just as we speak of the profession of law or medicine. Vocational Groups, therefore, denote groups of persons having the same profession or trade and joined together by free association. The learned professions of law and medicine have long since been organised for self-regulation, to maintain standards of qualification, to enforce codes of conduct and etiquette for the purpose of protecting professional interests and of giving proper service to the public. Now, with the development of industrialism, vocational groups tend to do the same for all those engaged in business and industry. Hence the essence of the vocational group is that

it is built upon a foundation of free associations of the parties or members who compose the natural unity or part of an industry or business. Thus, the vocational group of a steel industry would bring together, directors, free employers' federations, free trade unions, societies of technicians and others connected with the steel industry, and working for the good of the industry and of the whole country. Each of these groups (directors, management, workers, etc.,) has its own special problems and interests, but over and above these special interests, these groups are bound and linked together by the common purpose and welfare of the whole industry. This community of interest which is superior to immediate and particular interests is the key-note of the Holy Father's Plan for the reorganisation of industrial society.

Section II. The Basic Doctrine of the Vocational Group

The Vocational Group is based on the Catholic doctrine of Human Solidarity or Unity, "All must remember that the peoples of the earth form but one family in God" (Pius XI, *Atheistic Communism*, sec. 76) and on the Catholic teaching which binds all men to advance and secure the common good, "Man cannot be exempted from his divinely-inspired obligations towards civil society" (*id.* sec. 30).

In the industrial field, while business and industry provide profits and wages directly to those concerned with the manufacture and production of goods and services, industrialism must, at the same time, so operate that the needs of all in society are satisfied. This means that all those engaged in business and industry have a social obligation, so to work and cooperate among themselves that the food, clothing, shelter, means of transport and other goods and services required by human life are abundantly supplied to all members of the great human family.

"True and genuine social order demands that the various members of society be joined together by some firm bond. Such a bond of union is provided by the production of goods or the rendering of services in which employers and employees of one and the same vocational group collaborate; and by the common good which all such groups should unite to promote, each in its own sphere, with friendly harmony" (Q. A. sec. 84.) This principle of unity within

each group and between the different groups in trade and industry operates on two levels. First in the union and collaboration of all individuals and groups *within single industries*, such as coal, steel, transport, housing and so on; next, in the union and collaboration of all the different industries and trades within the country, *on a national scale*, to realise the common good of the whole country.

Section III. The Nature of the Vocational Group

The Vocational Group is *natural* to human society. That is to say, in the industrial field, it is an organisation most suited to the realisation of the end and purpose of industrialism — the welfare of all in society. Man has the right to life, and for most men the preservation of life means the exercise of some economic activity, i.e. working for another, or employing others for profit-making business. But man is also a social being, and therefore, his economic activity must also help towards securing the common good of all men in society. Now the Vocational Group helps man both to exercise his economic activity for his own benefit and for the common good, because it binds men together in a free association which safeguards their own particular interests and which works for the common welfare.

The Vocational Group does *not destroy private enterprise*. In fact, it cuts out the selfish harmful interests, and excessive love of gain which are the faults of exaggerated Capitalism, and restores to private enterprises its social character. This it does by fostering in private enterprise a spirit of "social obligation" and pride of profession and service.

The Vocational Group *authority* resides in Joint Councils made up of representatives of the various groups (directors, management, workers, etc.) elected democratically by their own organisations. Such groups are Local, Regional and National.

The Vocational Group is *not identified with the State*. The State gives a Charter to the Vocational Group, but does not constitute or establish the authority in the Vocational Group. By means of this Charter the State recognises the authority of the Vocational Group, giving it the necessary legal powers without absorbing it or supplanting it. Thus, Vocational Groups are not State organisations.

Section IV. The Chief Functions of the Vocational Group

The Vocational Group secures the *common good*. This is brought about by safeguarding and protecting the rights of individuals and of groups within the vast industrial field. This end and aim of the Vocational Group is paramount and springs from the very doctrine upon which it is based. Industry and business, today, are not only concerns of private and individual interest, but also of social and public interest. They are but forms of activity which exploit the resources of Nature for the well being of all in the great human family. Hence such activity must cater for the common good.

The Vocational Group *regulates the economic life of the country*. The quantity and quality of goods and services must be adapted to the needs of the consumer, and not left to the "free market of profit-making alone." Within each industry, the Vocational Group determines such matters as working conditions, apprenticeship, wages, hours of work and production.

The Vocational Group *establishes peace, based on justice and charity* in the industrial field. It accomplishes this by administrative, disciplinary, jurisdictional and representative means.

READINGS

Quadragesimo Anno (Q. A.) paras : 81 — 86.

Atheistic Communism paras : 51 — 54.

Econ. & political Life of Man : pp. 224 — 231.

EXERCISES AND FIELD WORK

1. What do you mean by Vocational Groups ?
2. Explain clearly how the Vocational Group is natural to society.
3. Summarise what Pope Pius XI says about Vocational Groups.
4. How would you reorganise an industry or business in your area or town on the Vocational Group principle ?

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